

powerful letter about the failure of this country to deliver justice. I quote her:

My father, Brian Murphy, worked on the 105th floor of the World Trade Center. [He] was killed when the first plane struck the North Tower. . . . Twenty-two years and four [Presidents] later, there has been no accountability for his death, nor the deaths of nearly three thousand [other Americans that day].

Leila and 3,000 other families like hers have been waiting for justice for 9/11 for almost 20 years, maybe longer. In those two decades, Leila has grown from a toddler to a law student. But the military commission trial against the five 9/11 codefendants in Guantanamo has never even started, 22 years later. Let me repeat that. More than two decades after the attacks, the 9/11 trial has never even started.

In her words, she said:

The parties are no closer to a trial date than when the hearings began in 2012—

More than a decade ago.

In the meantime, many family members have died, and others have given up hope. [They don't know that this] case will ever end in their lifetime.

Leila has traveled to Guantanamo to watch the military commission proceedings and came away frustrated and, in her words, “ashamed”—frustrated at the slow pace and makeshift nature of the proceedings and ashamed to learn how the defendants were actually tortured by her own government. Leila recognizes that because of this history, real justice is now unattainable.

By setting up ad hoc military commissions rather than trusting our courts, by torturing detainees rather than securing evidence lawfully, we have made true justice for families like Leila's virtually legally impossible.

If pretrial proceedings are still going on 20 years after the event, how many years do you think the actual trial would take? How many years of appeals would then follow? What are the chances that prosecutors can even convict men who were tortured at our hands for years? And if they did, what are the chances that those convictions would be upheld? How many family members would still be alive to see judgments of guilt, if they ever, ever come?

The reality is that securing guilty pleas in the 9/11 case is at this point the only way to deliver a modicum of justice to the victims and their families. The Biden administration should step up to the plate and deliver the justice that three previous administrations have failed to provide.

In Leila's words:

The military commissions have failed to provide justice for 9/11 families. Plea deals are a way out—

The only way out, maybe—

[but the] thing standing in the way is political will.

Leila says:

It is time for that to change.

She is not alone in recognizing that guilty pleas are realistically the only hope for justice.

On the morning of 9/11, former Bush administration Solicitor General Ted Olson went to his office at the Justice Department, while his wife Barbara headed to Dulles Airport for a flight to Los Angeles. Barbara had planned to leave the day before, but she delayed her departure by a day so she could wake up with Mr. OLSON, her husband, on his birthday.

After the two planes hit the World Trade Center towers, Mr. Olson's thoughts turned to his wife's safety. At first, he was relieved when the assistant told him that she was on the phone, but she was calling from the back of the airplane to tell him that her plane had been hijacked. She asked what she could tell the captain—and, then, silence.

At 9:37 a.m., American Airlines flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon, killing all 64 people aboard and 125 people in the Pentagon. Barbara was one of those victims.

Like Leila, Ted Olson is still awaiting justice, but today he believes that true justice seems unattainable.

By coincidence, I ran into him last night at a reception here on Capitol Hill. I went up and introduced myself to him, and I said I was going to talk about his statement and his wife on the floor. And he thanked me for it. He said: It is time for the American people to hear this straight from those of us who were directly impacted by 9/11.

In a powerful column earlier this month, Mr. Olson wrote:

I now understand that the commissions were doomed from the start.

He said:

We tried to pursue justice expeditiously in a new, untested legal system. It didn't work. The established legal system of the U.S. would have been capable of rendering a verdict in these difficult cases, but we didn't trust America's tried-and-true courts.

He concluded:

Nothing will bring back the thousands whose lives were so cruelly taken that September day. But we must face reality and bring this process to an end. The American legal system must move on by closing the book on the military commissions and securing guilty pleas.

In the fearful days after 9/11, our Nation's leaders made a fateful decision to forsake our most trusted institutions and betray our cherished values. The decision to open Guantanamo in a rush for vengeance and swift justice instead robbed the victims of 9/11 and their loved ones of their right to true justice. It is time to salvage what justice we can by bringing the commission cases to an end. We must also bring an end to the shameful, shameful indefinite detention of detainees who have never been charged with a crime. More than two decades after the incident of 9/11, these detainees have never been charged with any crime.

Eighteen of the thirty-two remaining detainees have never been charged with any crime and have been unanimously cleared for release—18—by our national security and military leadership. Yet

they continue to be detained indefinitely—day after day, year after year—for more than two decades.

The administration must redouble its effort to transfer the men who have been cleared for release or served their sentences. The recent transfer of three longtime detainees were steps forward, but the administration needs to pick up the pace. Men who have served their time or been cleared for release should not be sitting in Guantanamo. Ending these abuses is a moral and national security imperative.

Guantanamo Bay continues to serve the interest of America's worst enemies. Terrorist groups point to the history of torture and indefinite detention in their propaganda and recruitment videos. Autocrats point to Guantanamo to justify their own human rights abuses.

Adding insult to injury, this moral stain on our Nation and national security liability continues to be funded by American taxpayers. The cost of Guantanamo is astronomical. We spend more than \$540 million each year to keep Guantanamo open for just 32 detainees. Let me repeat that: \$540 million a year in taxpayers' money to keep Guantanamo open for 32 detainees. That is nearly \$17 million a year for each detainee. It is an outrage. And 18 of those men have been cleared for release for a long period.

We must not forget that Guantanamo was set up to be outside the reach of the law, outside the reach of the Constitution, outside the reach of the concept of habeas corpus, outside the reach of due process, and outside the reach of the Geneva Conventions. That is why it was chosen.

We must not forget that the detainees were held incommunicado and actually tortured at Guantanamo. We must not forget that more than half the men there still continue to be detained indefinitely without any charge or any trial. In America, we must stand for something better than that.

Guantanamo Bay, sadly, is a historic stain on America's long pursuit of the cause of justice. We have a responsibility to release detainees who have never been charged with a crime and have served their time, period, and we have a responsibility to deliver what little justice we still can to the victims of 9/11 and their families.

So let's do what must be done. Let's finally salvage a small measure of justice and dignity for Leila, for Ted Olson, and for everyone else who lost a loved one on that terrible day.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. OSSOFF). The Senator from Rhode Island.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, here I am again with my trusty, battered chart by my side, this time here to talk about the looming costs and economic risks of climate upheaval.

Almost exactly 5 years ago, I sent around a binder about this thick to all

of my Senate colleagues in which I compiled some of the most compelling warnings about the looming climate economic crisis. I have just recently updated it and shared it with all of the Budget Committee members. It is now more like this thick, as the warnings just keep piling up.

These warnings come from central bankers, economists, asset managers, insurance companies, investment banks, credit rating agencies, and leading management consultants—folks with a lot of credibility when it comes to economics, finance, corporate risk, and their effects on government spending and revenues—folks who often have a fiduciary obligation to get this right.

The Budget Committee has started to dig into these warnings. We have just held the first two of a series of hearings on climate impacts to our Federal budget. Our second hearing, held earlier today, explored warnings of crashes in coastal property values amid rising seas and more powerful storms.

One of our witnesses was Kate Michaud, the town manager of Warren, RI.

And next time we will spell “Rhode Island” correctly.

Warren is the smallest town in the smallest county of our smallest State. There, like in many small coastal towns all around the country, in Georgia and elsewhere, the problems are real and they are immediate. She testified that some homes in Warren have seen their value drop by one-third because of flood risk.

And sea level rise is projected to permanently flood some coastal portions of Warren over the next decade. This is mapping that is done by the State of Rhode Island that shows the projected flooding zone of Warren, and all of these are existing buildings and homes that will be inundated.

Warren is not alone. Zillow’s real estate database has identified over 4,800 homes in Rhode Island that would be under water with a projected 6 feet of sea level rise, which is projected for Rhode Island. That is nearly \$3 billion in home values.

And Rhode Island is not alone. The United States has nearly 13,000 miles of coastline. Forty percent of our population lives along the coast. More than a trillion dollars’ worth of residential and commercial real estate is coastal. And for most American households, their greatest wealth is their home.

First Street Foundation, whose CEO testified at this morning’s hearing, examines flood risk. It is what they do. Their examination shows significantly increasing risks to residential properties over the next 30 years. And Rhode Island does its own flood projections, and they show similar risks.

Just 2 weeks ago, a study found real estate exposed to flood risks was overvalued—i.e., the flood risk had not yet been taken into account—by up to a staggering \$237 billion, with the worst property overvaluations along coasts; and, of course, Florida, with all of its

coasts, is the prime liability. The study warns that, as a result, coastal real estate values may plummet and that can cascade into systemic risks for the mortgage market.

Freddie Mac, the mortgage giant, has made very similar warnings about coastal property values. Their former chief economist, who also testified at this morning’s hearing, has said:

The economic losses and social disruption . . . are likely to be greater in total than those experienced in the housing crisis and Great Recession.

Anybody who was here through that 2008 housing crisis and the recession that followed knows how sobering that warning is, and it comes from that collapse in coastal property values triggered by difficulty in getting mortgage and insurance, with its 30-year lead time, collapsing values and then cascading out into the rest of the economy.

Sea levels are rising, and the rate is accelerating. That is a scientific fact. As homes and businesses in coastal communities face more frequent sunny-day flooding and wetter and more violent ocean storms, more homes will be under water, both literally and figuratively. Insurance will become more expensive and harder to find. Mortgages depend on insurance. So lending will suffer. Coastal communities will become harder places to live and work, and real estate values and local tax bases will decline.

Moody’s is already looking at local municipal bonds in this light. In emergencies, coastal communities will turn to the Federal Government for financial assistance. Federal flood insurance costs will rise. For home mortgages, banks and insurance companies will look ahead 30 years. So, long before the ocean laps at physical doorsteps, those markets will be hit, and the effect in real estate markets across the country will bring harsh consequences for families and their financial stability.

I used the term “systemic risk” earlier. Systemic risk is a bland term used by economists. What it refers to is anything but bland. It refers to the massively destabilizing events that can cascade out and trigger general economic recession. Think of the mortgage crisis in 2008. Twenty percent of household wealth was wiped out in 2 years. Unemployment soared, and government revenues were reduced for a decade.

There is broad concern here about deficits. Well, deficits tripled as a result of that 2008 shock. According to CBO, revenues fell by \$4.4 trillion, and projected spending rose by \$800 billion to fund the recovery, for a net debt increase total of over \$5 trillion from that event.

Well, we should see the writing on the wall when it comes to climate risks. At our first hearing, Dr. Mark Carney, who has been Governor—their phrase for CEO—of the Bank of England and of the Bank of Canada, gave us the scale of the risk.

He testified that “over the balance of this century, climate change could reduce the level of global GDP per capita by 10 to 20 percent without efforts to limit warming.” That would be “the equivalent of a decade of no economic growth.”

Bob Litterman, an economist who spent more than two decades managing risk for Goldman Sachs as its chief risk officer, now chair of the Climate-Related Market Risk Subcommittee at the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission, testified:

We are on track for somewhere between 2.2 and 3.4 degrees of warming by 2100, which would result in GDP losses of somewhere between 2.6 and 4 percent. That’s more than our recent annual growth rate, implying the possibility of long-term negative growth as climate change worsens.

This is not a future problem. Some of these warned-of risks are already upon us. Already, climate-related natural disasters increase Federal spending on disaster assistance, flood insurance, crop insurance, and other programs. Already, extreme heat and drought force western farmers to leave land unplanted and reduce livestock herds. Droughts around the world already hit cotton production, raising costs on production like medical gauze and cloth diapers. Insurance prices are already through the roof—in Florida and Louisiana, hammered by increasingly violent hurricanes, and out West, under siege from more intense and frequent wildfires.

This will certainly get worse—much worse, particularly if warming exceeds 1.5 degrees Celsius. We are on a bad trajectory. Think of coastal cities flooded with water and Southwest cities that can’t get water. Think of a Salt Lake that is virtually gone and blowing dust over Salt Lake City. Deloitte—the management consulting firm—predicts that the differential between being responsible and reckless about climate could sum to more than \$220 trillion globally between now and 2070.

We use big numbers around here a lot. A \$220-trillion swing in the global economy is massive. And Deloitte is not exactly a green outfit.

There is some good news here. By acting now, we can minimize the damage and costs to households, businesses, and our economy—and there are huge economic opportunities from investing in climate action. The Inflation Reduction Act invested \$370 billion to create good-paying jobs and new economic opportunities. It will lower energy costs for families and small businesses and accelerate the transition to clean energy.

Looking ahead, a well-designed carbon border adjustment—an idea which has bipartisan support—would significantly curb greenhouse gas emissions in the United States and overseas and boost American heavy industry against our Chinese competitors and reshore American manufacturing jobs lost in past decades.

Let me close on tipping points. Tipping points are thresholds that change

the trajectory of harm, potentially dramatically. One example is the tipping point where warming will cause the Greenland ice sheet to collapse and melt. We don't know exactly where that threshold lies. That is one of the dangers of our climate experiment. But science suggests it is between 1.5 and 2 degrees Celsius of warming.

Well, folks, we have already warmed 1.1 degrees. So the distance to 1.5 or 2 degrees is pretty short.

If we lose the Greenland ice sheet, it is 22 feet of sea level rise. So we would do well to avoid these tipping points, to avoid the systemic economic risks, to behave prudently and responsibly, and to take advantage of a stronger and more stable clean energy economy that beckons. It is long past time to wake up.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Utah.

LIEUTENANT RIDGE ALKONIS

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, on February 2, I called on Japanese Prime Minister Kishida to transfer U.S. Navy Lt. Ridge Alkonis back to U.S. custody no later than midnight on February 28. I was explicit that a very public discussion about the U.S.-Japan relationship—and, in particular, the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement—would ensue if Lieutenant Alkonis were not back in U.S. custody by that date.

It is now March 1, 2023, and it is about 6:20 p.m. And Ridge Alkonis is not only not back in U.S. custody, he is not only not on U.S. soil, he is still languishing in a Japanese prison.

So let's have a frank discussion about our Status of Forces Agreement with Japan because we have waited long enough. Ridge Alkonis has waited long enough. And his wife Brittney Alkonis has waited long enough. Their children have waited long enough, all three of them. We are done waiting.

The Japanese Government has unjustly incarcerated Lieutenant Alkonis for too long. I traveled to Tokyo in August to meet with Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi, where he made an unequivocal commitment to expedite the Council of Europe prisoner transfer once the U.S. paperwork was completed. And it was understood at the time that that would be in a matter of days or weeks, not months or years.

Lieutenant Alkonis felt comfortable signing off on the transfer paperwork because of Foreign Minister Hayashi's commitment. With this understanding, the U.S. Department of Justice completed the necessary paperwork in less than 2 weeks. Japan has been sitting on that request ever since then, for months and months and months.

However, the Japanese Government tried to renege on its promise by having a junior member of the Japanese Embassy staff in Washington reach out to a member of my staff to deny that Foreign Minister Hayashi had ever made such a commitment. Allow me, not a member of my staff, to correct the record. Foreign Minister Hayashi,

you did make that commitment to me. I have not forgotten it, and I know you haven't either.

This isn't too much to ask of any country, let alone one on which we spend billions of dollars—billions of dollars—a year to defend. A Council of Europe transfer is not an extraordinary request. On the contrary, these kinds of requests are routine. Situations like this one are the very reason why we have a prisoner of transfer process in the first place. The stated purpose for the Council of Europe Treaty is to facilitate the rehabilitation of the transferred offenders and to relieve some of the administration and diplomatic issues that arise with the incarceration of foreign nationals.

Now, look, to be very clear, we are not even asking for Ridge to be released from custody, for him to just be told that his sentence is no longer intact. We are simply asking that he be transferred to U.S. custody to serve out the remainder of his sentence.

These transfers happen all the time. It makes little sense that we would allow those tasked with defending the Constitution and its enshrined principles to be treated so poorly by an allied nation, to be subjected to laws so draconian that they are unrecognizable to the principles of justice our servicemembers swear to defend.

When we swear to defend the Constitution of the United States, it represents an enduring commitment to individual liberty—a spirit that says no matter who we are or where we came from or what religion, if any, we practice, we enjoy liberty that is self-evident because it is God-given.

Our Armed Forces stand ready to protect not only the safety and sovereignty of the United States but the safety and sovereignty of our friends, like Japan, which enjoyed over \$20 billion in U.S. military aid over the last 5 years. And yet, they can't keep their promise to facilitate a routine prisoner transfer? I cannot and will not accept that—not now, not ever.

I don't think the American people can accept that either. In fact, I know they can't, nor should they. I don't think they would be OK knowing that we spend billions of dollars to defend a country when our Status of Forces Agreement with that country is so unfavorable to our troops. I don't think they would be OK sending 55,000 of their sons and daughters to support an allied country where they won't have the most basic legal right.

I am certainly not. Japan isn't either.

To illustrate, under the terms of the Japan-Djibouti Status of Forces Agreement—Djibouti, by the way, is the only country in which Japan has a foreign base—Japanese servicemembers are immune from criminal prosecution. They are completely immune. Why should Japan be allowed to treat U.S. forces any less favorably than Japanese forces are treated by Djibouti?

Look, I want to be very clear here. Japan has a good thing going. It

doesn't get much better than the deal they have got going. I don't know why they would want to jeopardize that.

But patience in Washington has grown thin. And the Japanese Government has vastly underestimated the intensity of bipartisan support for Lieutenant Alkonis in Congress at every level of government, including a commitment from President Biden—a recent commitment from President Biden himself—to Brittney Alkonis, saying: "I promise you, we're not giving up, OK?"

President Biden is right. He said that with good reason. And he said that not only as President of the United States but also as a red-blooded American who cares about this country—himself a father of a decorated, respected U.S. military officer. We are not giving up. This isn't going away. We are not just going to keep quiet. And the longer Ridge remains in Japanese custody, the louder we will get.

If the Japanese Government can't respect our servicemembers, and we can't trust them to uphold their commitments, then we are long overdue for a renegotiation of the Status of Forces Agreement between our two nations. We must do so to protect our servicemembers, especially if they are stationed in a country with a justice system as draconian as Japan's.

In Japanese criminal justice, interrogation is the primary means police and prosecutors use to obtain confessions. These are no ordinary interrogations—not by our standards, not by a long shot. In a typical criminal case, the average Japanese interrogation lasts more than 20 hours. In bribery interrogations, they average 130 hours.

The night that Lieutenant Alkonis was involved in that tragic accident, rather than being taken to a hospital, he was placed in solitary confinement for 26 days. During that time, he was denied access to legal counsel, denied access to an adequate translator, denied proper medical care—despite the fact he had just been in a serious accident—and was subjected to intense interrogation tactics at all hours of the night. He was subjected to bright lights, causing sleep deprivation, and coerced into signing complex legal documents written in Japanese, with no interpreter available, just to have a chance at getting bail.

It was later discovered that Japanese authorities manipulated Lieutenant Alkonis's forced statement. It is not uncommon in Japan where 26 percent of prosecutors there have admitted in an anonymous survey to falsifying suspects' statements. He was told not to contest the falsified documents as the Japanese court would perceive this as a lack of remorse. Given the unfair treatment of one of our best and brightest, we as a Congress should take every precaution to ensure that our servicemembers are never ever treated this way again.

I am not exaggerating. The U.N. Human Rights Council and other legal